

POPULAR POISONS! TRACT. No. 1.

Is the Common Use of Tobacco a Sin?

AN APPEAL TO THE 30,000 CLERGYMEN IN THE UNITED STATES.

"MEN, BRETHREN, AND FATHERS:"

Some of you abhor Tobacco, and manfully express your abhorrence; some of you, I regret to say, are abject slaves to it, and are sensible of your bondage; whilst some of you do little more than trifle with this gigantic evil, when brought to your notice.

In my Anti-Tobacco Mission, I often submit resolutions for your action which denounce this habit as pernicious and decidedly sinful. As a resolution was lately under discussion, said a titled divine, "*I believe this is an idle, dirty habit, but not a sin in any sense,*" and his juniors of the Association concurred in this opinion. You generally do not regard it as an offence demanding discipline or pulpit rebuke, but a foolish habit, which may be trifled about with impunity, or gently censured, as suits convenience. And this "Master in Israel" substantially expresses your views, or the views of an overwhelming majority, by calling it "an idle, dirty habit, but not a sin." I assume nothing by treating your views as practically identical, and therefore I raise the issue on this point,

IS THE COMMON USE OF TOBACCO A SIN?

Come, let us reason together, respecting this fashionable evil, as becomes ministers of Christ.

You concede too much, My Brethren, when you say this is an idle, impure habit, and deny its sinfulness. You surely ought to have known that filth and sin have a strange affiliation. God has settled this point, by demanding a cleanly priesthood and people, by making a difference between the clean and unclean, and expressing an everlasting abhorrence of impurity in all forms. How can you maintain the sinless character of this habit, with the Old Testament, with all its rituals and economies, against you, and coming down on your position as an avalanche?

I doubt whether your ground is any more tenable, under the Christian economy. Physical impurity is rebuked in all those passages which bid men crucify the lusts of the flesh, and cleanse themselves of all filthiness. The Apostles were men of common sense, and when they denounced filth I suppose they denounced sin. Whitefield maintained that cleanliness was next to godliness; and Mahomed, in harmony with Bible sentiments, anathematizes impurity, and in his Fifth Commandment says, **KEEP THY BODY CLEAN.**

Do you know the deadly effects of this drug? That, as a narcotic, a cathartic, an emetic, a life-destroyer, chemists place it on

the same shelf with arsenic, prussic acid, and poisons the most virulent? Do you know that a few drops, in condensed form, will speedily dispatch man or beast; and that the evidence is painfully conclusive that hosts of "chewers and smokers" die annually by the poison? Many a tobacco sot "dies and gives no sign." He drops dead in the busy walks of life, or he lies down at night and rises not, "till the heavens be no more." Did you know that physicians of profound research, "whose little finger is thicker than our loins," in matters of this sort, pronounce tobacco as decidedly injurious to body, mind, and soul? I beg you, bestow a glance on the pages of Cooper, Bell, Brodie, Paris, of other lands; and on those of Rush, Muzzey, Warren, Twitchell, and Beck, of our own, and no longer trifle with the ravages of this poison.

Tell me, My Brethren, do you see no sad effects of this drug around you? Nothing like Delirium Tremens, Dyspepsia, Consumption, and other ghastly diseases, in this connection? Have you no victims in your churches, who are strangely sottish, dumpish, and devoid of religious sensibility? Have you no friends in the wide circle of friends, loved once, loved now, who are maniacs from this source? Have you no dolts around you, once lively and enterprising, but whose activity is turned into smoke? Alas! you must often see those who are living corpses, long since murdered by this drug, whose epitaph you may write, DEAD, BUT NOT BURIED! I do not pretend that tobacco injures everybody alike. Some men have but little to injure. The tobacco-worm and rock-goat are not injured by it, it is said; and "some men," says an ingenious friend, "are very goatish in their nature, and, as the goat prevails, tobacco injures less and less." "I think," says a profound philosopher, "it will injure everybody but a fool!"

THE COMMON USE OF TOBACCO, LIKE ALCOHOL, IS A VIOLATION OF THE LAWS OF LIFE, AND ASSAILS BODY, INTELLECT, AND SOUL. —What right has a man to whip himself into the use of a nauseous, noxious poison, which, in time, will blunt the acumen of all his five senses, disturb his appetite, diminish nutrition, muscle, strength, and all his capacities to serve God? Is it no sin to rob God? What right has a man to use a drug which disturbs the healthful action of his mind, disposes it to be irritable at one time and sottish at another, and, in cases sadly numerous, smites it with forgetfulness, idiocy, or outright insanity? Is it no sin to destroy intellect?

What right has a man to enslave his soul? This drug, by *narcotizing*, *debilitating*, and *sensualizing* the soul, binds it in chains, and makes it an absolute slave. I speak with reverence, if the eye of God sees a slave on earth, in the way of eminence, he is probably made such by the potency of this drug. Is it no sin to enslave the soul?

Man's organic structure, My Brethren, is perfect, for God is its Author. God's will is as manifest in this organism as in the ten

commandments. Whoever injures this "divine workmanship," by the use of a deadly thing, plants his will in conflict with God's will. What is this but man striving with his Maker? What is this but rebellion? What is rebellion against God but sin? In your pulpits, many of you ring the changes on the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the world over and elsewhere. But sin is no undefinable phantom. Sin is *the transgression of law*, written by the finger of God on the whole organism of a man, as well as in the Bible; a transgression which usually carries conviction to the soul, unless stupefied by abuse. The common use of tobacco is *in all cases a violation of physical law*. The victim may or may not have come to a knowledge of this violation; if he has not, with him it is no sin, or merely a sin of ignorance. But, the moment he becomes conscious of this violation, the violation is no longer simply physical, but moral; the act becomes a sinning act, a sin, and the actor a sinner. Millions sensualized by this drug are mournfully defective in moral discrimination, but this is not true of all its devotees.

I knew one who said, "Sir, I can hear no more, for all you say on this drug is true, and cuts me to pieces. I have been a slave to it twenty years, and shall die a slave; but, if my son uses it, I will disinherit him!" Here was consciousness of slavery and of sin.

I knew an excellent deacon, who was an inveterate "chewer," who, on reading the passage which bids us glorify God, whether we eat or drink, said to his wife, "I cannot glorify God in the use of this poison." He dropped it, once for all, and became a holier and a happier man. Here was the consciousness and renunciation of sin. A ceasing to do evil in one form.

I can name a clergyman who was much enslaved to his snuff; he sometimes reprov'd a neighbor who was a drunkard. At length the drunkard said to him, "If you will give up your snuff, I will give up my rum." The bargain was made. But within forty-eight hours the clergyman was in perfect anguish for his snuff. He set a spy over the drunkard to watch for his downfall. When told that the fatal cup had passed his lips, he flew to his snuff-box with the fury of a maniac, made himself idiotic, and died a fool! Tell us which was the greater drunkard? Or, as sin is the point in debate, which was the greater sinner?

The time would fail me to tell of men, Christian men, and Christian ministers, who have renounced this sin as they renounce other sins, and who, with rejuvenated health and jubilant hearts, bless God for their escape from these "bonds of iniquity."

You, My Brethren, do not believe the common use of tobacco is a sin. Your hearers, I can assure you, if properly addressed, would have a different opinion. Let the affinities of this habit be portrayed before them,—its tendencies to **INDOLENCE, POVERTY, STRONG DRINK, and CRIME**,—let them see that the habit does a well man no good, but much harm; that it wastes time, invaluable time;

that it squanders a frightful amount of property; that more is paid for it than for education or religion, the army or navy, and they will promptly acknowledge it to be a sin. Beseech your young men "to do themselves no harm." Assure them that this habit tends to make them lank and lean, sallow and sickly, and is a violation of the laws of life, and they will acknowledge it to be a sin. In a fraternal manner, remind some in your church that this drug is their idol; that it has their last thought at night, and their first in the morning; that they shorten their prayers in their families and closets to reach it; that they are wretched in prayer-meetings without it, and often much stupefied by it; and they will probably believe all you say, acknowledge the habit to be a sin, and make tearful efforts to relinquish it.

As I now write, I receive a letter from a missionary in the Sandwich Islands, which states that the churches there consider this habit as sinful, demanding discipline, and act accordingly. How long shall churches in pagan lands excel ours in purity of doctrine and practice?

Ah! my brethren, deal with this sin with half the plainness with which pulpits deal with foibles which should be beneath their notice; beseech men to abstain from this, as a fleshly lust, which wars against the soul; beseech them to present their bodies holy and acceptable unto God, which is not done while thus defiled! Urge upon them the great command to love God with all their soul, and show them that this is not obeyed by the inebriate on tobacco, any more than by the inebriate on alcohol, and your hearers will respect your logic and fidelity, and you will soon see that this habit is a sin; for whole congregations which you address will pronounce it such. This fashionable, all-pervading habit is a GREAT SIN. It is destroying millions of men! It is stealing the march on our whole race; and Turkey, Holland, and Mexico, are going down under its withering power, and God forbid that America should follow in the mournful track!

I devote my time, and my humble acquisitions, to the thankless task of calling attention to this evil.

I make no apologies, Brethren, for this boldness of speech. I assail a nauseous, noxious abomination, at war with Christianity and Civilization, and which springs from the depths of heathenism. God of Heaven! deliver Churches of Christ from "filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh and spirit" by this polluting drug! Purge, O! purge American Pulpits from this impurity! Then a ministry of less smoke, and more fire, shall assault this iniquity and other iniquities with success, achieve more for the nation, for God—and man.

Yours, fraternally,
GEO. TRASK.

Fitchburg (Mass.), 1855.